AN ASSEMBLAGE OF BUILT DEFINITIONS OBSERVED IN SAUVE DISASSEMBLED

AND IN OTHER EXAMPLES OF ADDITIVE ARCHITECTURE FOR THE DESIGN OF AN EDUCATIONAL BUILDING


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ABSTRACT

AN ASSEMBLAGE OF BUILT DEFINITIONS OBSERVED IN SAUVE DISASSEMBLED AND IN OTHER EXAMPLES OF ADDITIVE ARCHITECTURE FOR THE DESIGN OF AN EDUCATIONAL BUILDING

by Jean-Pierre Carniaux

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The observation of European villages, as well as other examples of additive architecture bring to an understanding of physical USE-FORM which can be applied to the building situation we face nowadays.

Although most of our present information about vernacular architecture is the picturesque description of a lost world, I believe that a careful documentation of an existing village can help in generating a design.

This piece of work tries to use form references (rules of assemblage, organizing framework) previously observed (that is UN DONE) in Sauve, a medieval village in the south of France, for the projective design of a high school on a Cambridge site.

It is not a completed object but the account of a process of making a place, each design phase
making an independent partial contribution to the whole, allowing plural interpretation for the next design phase, each phase keeping its identity.

This process can be considered a surrogate reality of the way these villages have been built, added on, changed during their own larger history. It cannot be the pastiche of a total form transformed to another scale, in another context.

The analogy between the two places will be found in their respective structure rather than in their respective words, rules of addition, rules of combination, and facts. Furthermore it is hoped that such a process would allow for participatory design (whoever the participants may be—users, other designers) since all decisions are partial and supportive of the next one.

This thesis is part of a collective work which involved Gail Boyajian and George Hauser, who, using the same reference, Sauve, projected different designs.

Thesis Supervisor: Maurice Smith
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Sauve, Gard, is a village of 1400 inhabitants, attached to a cliff, overlooking a river. It used to be an important commercial town on the road between Marseille and Toulouse. During the XIIth century, it housed ten thousands people, "when Paris was only sheltering twenty seven thousands souls." (Source: Syndicat d'initiative...

This very high density town settled in a place where the natural physical framework is making an important change in definition. In this land of plateaux and plains, separated by an abrupt vertical white stone cliff, most villages do settle where the physical context is already an incentive to build upon. Sauve was not built on the top of a plateau ("sea of rocks") where one would find singular, object-like castles to house the solitude of a king, neither in the plain where again large farm complexes would sit alone in the agricultural land, but grows from the cliff-wall itself, and where the river changes its direction.

A PLACE IN A PLACE,
A NON-NEUTRAL FRAMEWORK.

The vertical facade of the village is a hard edge, difficult to penetrate (the dimensions of the ways in being in the same range as the ones of private entrances to houses, but once you are in, you will find a new raised ground, horizontal surface, overlooking the river some 56 feet above; the large public square of the town.) THE STEP.

The ground floors of most of the houses are built with the same collective vocabulary of vaults, sometimes left open to let a street pass through, or even further back in the block (along the public square) to house market activities, shops.

THE OVERLAP BETWEEN PRIVATE/PUBLIC ACTUALLY BUILT WITH A PARTICULAR VOCABULARY.
The main streets, directionnal, roughly following the direction of the land, respond to privacies, to other streets going up the hill, to public open space by changing some of their definitions.

A DIRECTIONNAL DISTRIBUTION, ACKNOWLEDGING WHAT IT DISTRIBUTES.

AN ASSEMBLAGE OF PIECES WHERE EACH PIECE HAS A LIFE OF ITS OWN AND REMAINS IDENTIFIABLE IN BUILDING UP A COMPLEX WHOLE, AT ANY SCALE.
Site considerations: Enabling pedestrian access through the site and encouraging community use of the school facilities distributed the building such that a major path answering Throwbridge street connection to Harvard square and residential neighborhoods north of Cambridge street and east of Ellery street would cross the site passing along a strongly defined outdoor place between the public library, the major school building and the outlined diagrammed dining facility.

DIRECT REFERENCE TO SAUVE MAIN SQUARE IN TERMS OF ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DISTRIBUTION.

Program: 2500 students to accommodate. A programmatic piece physically defined, has been used and became more and more difficult to recognize as the process went. (see drawing p.23)

Building framework:
Using Sauve section, the distribution pattern climbs up the building to get to the roof of the auditorium, which becomes a raised "new ground" around which more privacies can get built. Hence a strong context is built up, the dark areas finding their use as an auditorium, small garage, storage, machine room... Lower raised grounds in the northern growth of the building could accommodate sports courts for community use.

A STEP. A NON NEUTRAL FRAMEWORK.

Vocabulary to build the framework:
- Concrete channels, long directional pieces with a span of 48' to 60', in reference to the long "horizontal" streets of Sauve, are distribution elements.
- Planks (32' to 20' span), finding supports onto channel beams, walls, and beams (20' span), and Walls are making the privacies.
- The slack between these two systems is taken care of by poured in place concrete, and is the vocabulary
which will build, with more ease, a complex overlapping between the distribution and the privacies, conditions for intersections of conflicting directions, in some collective form.

THE OVERLAP BETWEEN PRIVATE/PUBLIC ACTUALLY BUILT WITH A PARTICULAR VOCABULARY.
"Our work should be limited to the definition of a supporting framework full of tensions, on which should be able to develop the most disparate organizationnal modes and formal configurations which stimulate the richest dis-order."


"Flexibility leaves every theoretical possibility open, in the sense that nothing is A PRIORI excluded, but on the other hand, it does not initiate anything either."

HERMAN HERTZBERGER.

"Can we assemble a varied pluralistic 3-dimensional 'habitable' field? Can there be some yes!"

MAURICE SMITH. What should 'architecture' be for? Architects or designers. Harvard educational review, vol39, no.4, 1969.


Fenollosa; The chinese written character as a medium for poetry.

Georges Bataille; Oeuvres completes.


Hill, Miller, Friedlander Inc.; A program for the Cambridge High Schools.

Harvard educational review; Architecture and education vol39, no. 1969.

Chinese characters: Dr. L. Wieger, S.J.

The sun rises east. The same way the sun can be physically seen rising above the horizon line and hide behind a sign of a tree.
in chinese characters, I hope the following drawings can be seen as associative steps towards an 'associative' place.

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